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A RECORD OF RESPONSE

(Ohio State University Commencement Address)
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by
Dr. J. George Harrar
President,
Rockefeller Foundation
New York, N.Y.

In looking back at the record of the state and land-grant universities of this nation, it is clearly evident that theirs is a record of response and great achievement -- response to the basic needs of a young nation attempting to develop its national resources and to forge ahead socially, economically and culturally. The most dramatic achievements are those in agriculture and the various sciences and technologies, but at least as important is the direct education of great numbers of American youth and the indirect education of millions more through the teachers prepared by these great institutions.

As a native of Ohio, it is especially pleasant for me to be here on this occasion and to participate with you in an exercise which marks yet another milestone in the continuing contribution of the Ohio State University to the strength of this nation. To me, commencement has always been an exciting moment at which a new generation of young men and women, molded and tempered by an exacting educational experience, is launched into the orbit of contemporary society.

At the first commencement ceremony at the Ohio State University in 1878, a class of six men was graduated, of whom five received the Bachelor of Science degree and one the Bachelor of Arts. Life at the University must have been halcyon in those days, for the campus was located three miles from the Capitol on a beautiful farm encircling the pleasantly rustic Mirror Lake. The 250 students enrolled at the University in that year of its first commencement paid only $15 tuition each. Admittedly, those were somewhat larger dollars than today's!

We need only look around us to realize the changes that have takenplace since 1878. The tremendous expansion of this campus; the growth of the University population to 30,000; the four-hundred-fold increase in the size of today's graduating class; the wide array of specialized disciplines which are available in 1964 are but a few.

The state universities and land-grant colleges were founded upon the principle that American young people ought to have access to education

beyond the high-school level in order to fit them better for the increasingly demanding and more productive lives that were expected of them in a developing nation. The mechanic arts, the pursuit of agriculture on a technically enlightened basis, the understanding of business and commerce--all these were seen by the leaders of the day as essential to the country's future and, therefore, as essential to the country's youth. Their idea was that the human condition was susceptible of sharp improvement through the propagation of advanced techniques of dealing with, or exploiting the environment. This was an optimistic and vital point of view and it is one which has characterized at once the growth of our public institutions of higher learning and the growth of our nation.

Because of this philosophy and because public tax money was their source of support, the state universities and land-grant colleges were at one time deprecated by many as catch-all institutions. They were often

obligated by law to provide some sort of education for all the young men and women of the state who requested it. Commonly, the requirements for admission did not even include a high-school diploma. However, it is vital to recognize that the state and land-grant universities opened the doors of opportunity to thousands of young people who--had there been no such institutions--would have been prevented by economic distress or lack of accommodation from gaining the benefits of a higher education. In doing so, these institutions were enacting a cardinal principle of our society--that of equal opportunity. Thanks to their pioneering, the practice of that principle has today spread throughout our land in a network of distinguished educational institutions supported by federal, state and municipal funds. Over the years, the leading state universities have steadily gained greater control over standards of admission and academic performance enabling them to attain leadership positions in our educational system.

In the pursuit of excellence, the leading public institutions have enjoyed certain advantages. One is the relatively secure expectation that money will be available from the public purse to support the business of the university on an ascending scale as the educational demands of a growing and increasingly enlightened citizenry become apparent. A second advantage possessed by the public institutions is the apparent disadvantage of having to accept a wide spectrum of students primarily from within each university's own state. The numerousness and diversity of the student body has both forced and enabled the great state universities to deepen their staffs and to broaden their curricula to meet the needs of students seeking training in many different disciplines. In fact, the state universities have been most imaginative and versatile in developing courses of study in response to the evolution of social requirements.

To me, a fundamental and enduring philosophy of our great state institutions has been their acceptance of the responsibility to serve all segments of the population of the state which supports them. An early example was their critical role in the improvement of secondary education, reaching from the establishment of university high schools and the stimulation of the construction of

urban and rural high schools, where most needed, to the initiation of the practice of accreditation and the encouragement of rural teachers through teacher institutes. In so doing, they promoted the development of the modern secondary school system and assured an expanding and improving system of secondary schools and teachers with concomitant increase in the number of qualified and eager applicants for higher education. Ultimately, many of these activities were transferred to the state departments of education which were set up mainly because of the zealous pioneering efforts of state university faculties and administrators.

It should be remembered also that the state universities early provided education for women and did much to make coeducation a standard feature of American life. The President of Ohio State in 1897 concluded that "this intertraining and equal training takes the simper out of the young women and the roughness out of the young men."

An inherent principle which so many of our great state and land-grant universities have held to over the years has been the dissemination of the information and materials developed within the various components of the university to persons and organizations elsewhere within the state who might

benefit from them. I think this extension phenomenon directed to agriculture, engineering, adult and other forms of continuing education, and a multiplicity of other techniques, has reached its highest expression here in the United States. Today, all the people of a state can feel that the state university is their institution and that it serves their needs and interests as a part of its total function. As great and visible as the attainments of these universities have been in the form of the education of succeeding generations of students, perhaps their special services to a broad spectrum of the state's citizens is of equal significance.

During the past two decades, our nation has been moving at an increasingly rapid pace into the arena of international affairs. With the formation of the United Nations, the establishment of foreign-aid programs and a multiplicity of other international agencies, the role of the American university in the nation and in the world has undergone dramatic change. No longer are we able to concentrate our efforts on the training of our own young men and women for limited national purposes. Rather, we now find ourselves in a position where university curricula, research and extension activities are of necessity

oriented to a worldwide viewpoint. As our own involvement in international affairs has become more intricate and far-flung, it has become necessary to give scholarly aid to the solution of burgeoning problems which confront this nation and the world today. As a consequence, we now see area studies programs on every hand and individuals being trained in international relations, linguistics, diplomacy, technical assistance, and many other disciplines in order that we may have trained minds and skilled hands to help the people of other nations who have humanitarian claims upon us and who seek our assistance.

The aid sought from the university community of this nation by the emerging nations is of many kinds. First, we are being asked to open the doors of our institutions of higher learning to eager students from other nations where the need for skilled personnel and advanced training is the chief obstacle to progress. The response of the university and college community to this need has been extraordinary, but because of their history, dimensions and diversity, the state-supported institutions have perhaps carried the larger share of the burden. The emerging nations have also sought direct help through foreign-aid programs, in which Americans work shoulder-to-shoulder with nationals overseas

toward the joint accomplishment of important goals aimed to further economic and social progress. Here again, our public institutions have a distinguished record of achievement, and the Ohio State University has long been active and effective in this critically important undertaking. In the field of education, the sister-to-sister relationship between universities here and abroad can be one of the most promising means of assistance. The ultimate goal of this relationship must always be development of the recipient institution to the point where it may serve the needs of its country as effectively as do our own institutions of higher education.

The road ahead can be only dimly perceived, but some of the shape of the future is reasonably clear. Certainly our numbers here and elsewhere will grow, as will the demands and expectations of the many new nations and those others seeking to step up their pace of development. Conceivably, unless world leadership is wise and vigorous, the sheer increase in numbers of people could nullify all of these efforts. Overpopulation is already a major concern in many areas, with its inevitable companions--ignorance, ill-health and hunger. Unless and until it becomes possible to achieve a reasonable balance between

numbers and nutrition, health, education and opportunity throughout the world, we can look forward only to growing misery, greater tensions and ultimately conflict.

The population problem may seem remote to us here, but it is not. We are already 70 million more than only a generation ago and may well be over 250 million well before the turn of the century. In the meantime, world population is expected to reach more than 6 billion. The predictions for the next century are frightening, and will surely come true if we are not successful in making substantial progress toward population stabilization.

Closer to home, we might observe that the university community will be faced with the massive problem of the accommodation and instruction of the swiftly rising floods of students who will be clamoring for higher education in the years ahead. Sooner rather than later, this will call for a revamping of our traditional pattern and rhythm of education. The "multiversity" is already in being, but institutional proliferation alone will not be enough. We will have to improve our efficiency in the use of time, curricula, facilities, and modern electronic technology. Although we should resist the disappearance of the time-honored student-teacher relationship--Mark Hopkins on one end of a log and a student on the other--in the future they will be seated on a computor.

The pace of change in this last half of the 20th century is incredibly swift. Domestic problems within and between segments of our society are knotty, bitter and increasingly alarming. Elsewhere tensions mount; as the cold war continues, disagreements multiply and sparks of conflict light the international scene. We cannot ignore these nor escape the responsibility that our history and position impose upon us. We must have greater wisdom, understanding courage and integrity than ever before if we and the rest of the free world are to survive and retain the values and freedom for which we have worked and fought.

I believe that the burdens of responsibility which will fall upon you and all those others leaving the academic scene this month and in the years ahead will be heavy ones. Your success in carrying them toward solution will in no small measure depend upon the preparation you have received here. If you have been stimulated to think, taught to learn, been made cognizant of contemporary issues, and have been inspired to assume the fullest responsibilities of citizenship, then I think the future may be brighter. I am persuaded that this is so, and that you can move confidently with the changing scene and participate in decisions and actions which will insure that these changes are constructive rather than destructive. If so, you and your alma mater will together have fulfilled

your highest purpose. "Disciplina in civitatem"--education for citizenship--is the motto of Ohio State University. Its distinguished record of response and achievement during the past is ample and heartening evidence that this university will continue to interpret its motto in modes which will assure continuing and growing contributions to the well-being of the state and nation and to all mankind.